

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the Office Action are respectfully requested in view of this amendment and the following reasons. By this amendment, claims 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 19 have been amended, and claims 1, 5, 10, 11, 15, and 20 have been canceled. Accordingly, claims 2-4, 6-9, 12-14, and 16-19 are pending in this application. The cancellation of claims 1, 5, 10, 11, 15, and 20 is made without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein.

Claims 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, and 19 have been amended in independent form, each incorporating the features of canceled claim 1, 5, 11, or 15. Claims 4 and 14 have been amended to make proper reference to amended claims 2 and 12, respectively, rather than to canceled claims 1 and 11. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the above amendments introduce no new matter within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §132.

Entry of the Amendment is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 because it (a) places the application in *prima facie* condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) does not raise new issues requiring further search and/or consideration by the Examiner because similar subject matter was previously considered by the Examiner and thus further consideration and/or search by the Examiner is not warranted; and (c) places the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. For at least these reasons, entry of the present Amendment is therefore respectfully requested. Accordingly, Applicant requests reconsideration and timely withdrawal of the pending rejections for the reasons discussed below.

Claim Objection

Claims 2, 3, 6-9, 12, 13, and 16-19 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response to this objection, claims 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, and 19 have been amended to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 3, 7, 13, and 17 have not been amended because they respectively depend upon amended claims 2, 6, 12, and 16, which are deemed allowable. In view of this, Applicant respectfully submits that amended claims 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18 and 19, and claims 3, 7, 13, and 17 dependent therefrom, overcome the stated objection. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the objection to claims 2, 3, 6-9, 12, 13, and 16-19.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0150016 applied for by Yasuda *et al.* (“Yasuda”).

Claims 1, 5, 10, 11, 15, and 20 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the rejection thereof moot. Claims 4 and 14 have been amended to depend upon allowable claims 2 and 12 and thus are allowable for at least this reason. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection of claims 2 and 12.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant appreciates the indication that claims 2, 3, 6-9, 12, 13, and 16-19 contain allowable subject matter. Claims 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, and 19 have been amended to be independent claims. Claims 3, 7, 13, and 17 have not been amended because Applicant respectfully submits that these claims depend from allowable base claims and are allowable for at least this reason. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 2, 3, 6-9, 12, 13, and 16-19 are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Applicant believes that a full and complete response has been made to the pending Office Action and respectfully submits that all of the stated grounds for objection and rejection have been overcome or rendered moot. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are allowable and that the application is in condition for allowance.

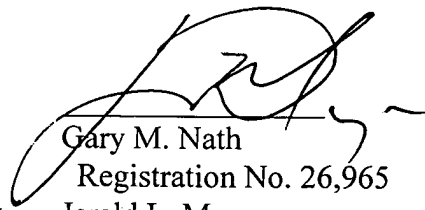
Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the number below to expedite prosecution.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Reply is respectfully requested.

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